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January 21, 1981

Dr. Purnell W. Choppin
Professor of Virology
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Dear Purnell,

I think very highly of Dyann Wirth, and am pleased to support with enthusiasm her appointment as a Rockefeller University Fellow.


Although she was a graduate student of Phil Robbins, Dyann carried out with me a substantial series of experiments on the biogenesis of Sindbis glycoproteins. From the beginning, our relationship was that of equal collaborators, rather than as teacher and student. The overall idea for the project was mine, but Dyann was the major motivating force in designing and actually executing the experiments. Even at that early stage in her career (1973-1977) she demonstrated an impressive ability to develop and to bring to bear on a complex problem an extremely wide range of techniques. The fact that, as a graduate student, she was able to make significant contributions to a number of different fields testifies to her prodigious energy, her laboratory skills and, most importantly, to her extremely broad and deep knowledge of cell biology, virology and biochemistry. She is one of those rare individuals who, from the beginning would function as a mature, independent investigator, particularly with respect to the critical choice of research problems.

As a postdoctoral fellow in Gilbert's lab she has done a superb job in cloning and sequencing the Sindbis 26S mRNA. I have not had much contact with her during this period, but I do know that the key point is that both the idea for and the execution of this mammoth project are entirely hers. Her recent decision to focus on the molecular biology of parasitic protozoans strikes me as an excellent one. I don't know exactly on which system she will focus, but I have complete confidence that she will soon be at the top of the field!

Perhaps the strongest thing I can say about her is that a number of us are trying to get a faculty position for Dyann at the new Whitaker College at M.I.T. She will make an ideal professional colleague.

With best wishes.

Sincerely yours,



Harvey F. Lodish
Professor of Biology